A

LETTER

FROM A

FREE-HOLDER

Of the County of

NORFOLK,

To one of the

KNIGHTS

Of the SHIRE:

Occasion'd by

Dr. *Sacheverall's*

TRYAL.

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A LETTER FROM A FREE-HOLDER, Of the County of NORFOLK, To one of the KNIGHTS Of the SHIRE: Occasioned by Dr. Sacheverell's TRYAL.

Honoured Sir,

I Have always disapprov'd of Free-holders pretending to direct their Representatives what they should do, and what they should not do: 'Tis Assuming a Power not ever practised in *England* till of late Years; it seems fitter to be practised in a Popular State than a Monarchy: My present Design is quite otherwise, humbly to beg my

Repreſentatives Opinion to clear ſome Doubts I now labour under.

The Meaſures of Obedience are the preſent Subject of all Debates in our Country; one Party maintain the Doctrine of Goſpel Obedience for Conſcience Sake, believing the Powers that are to be of GOD; the other Party obey for Temporal Intereſt Sake, determining that all Government is for the Good of the Community, and that when it ceaſes to be ſo, 'tis no longer to be Obeyed, but may be Reſiſted, and they make themſelves Judges when 'tis bad for the Community. I ſhall be glad to be inform'd what is the loweſt Degree of Good-Government that is to be Obeyed, and what the firſt Degree of Bad that is to be Reſiſted and Oppoſed with Force. 'Tis urged that St. *Paul*, and St. *Peter* writ in a Time when the Temporal Government was Abſolute without any Human Limitation, and for that Reaſon adapted the Meaſures of Obedience accordingly; But we live under the Happieſt of Governments, a Monarchy limited by Good and Reaſonable Laws; and ſome think if we are obliged to keep ſtrictly to St. *Paul* and St. *Peter's* Rule of Unlimited Obedience, our Happy Monarchy ſo well bounded by Law may degenerate into Tyranny and Abſolute Power; from whence 'tis a growing Notion amongſt us, That that ſame Goſpel Obedience is not Conſiſtent with our Government, being different from that under which the Apoſtle lived. Now to be ſatisfied when

when to Obey and when to Resist, seems to me a Point not yet fully settled and determined; and I being inclin'd to behave my self as in Duty I ought, desire to know what Act of our Prince will absolve me from my Allegiance and justifie my Resistance; what known Law of the Land I have to be my Guide in the Case; if nothing is to be said but that I am to Obey as long as my Prince Governs according to Law, and may Resist when he Governs contrary to Law, then every Subject is judge for himself till the Measures of Obedience are divulged by a Written Law; for our Laws are so Voluminous, that it can't be suppos'd that every Country-Man can take them for his Guide; and he may as Dangerously Err, if he pins his Faith on another's Sleeve; I call it Dangerous, because if he Resists and misses the Critical Point, he is Guilty of High Treason. Fine, Imprisonment, loss of Members, and Death, are Punishments the Subjects frequently experience, and deservedly for Offences against the Laws; but I never could find or hear of any Law that inflicted any Punishment on our Supream Governour for his Transgression of the Law, much less who was to decree or pronounce the Punishment, always taking it for granted that it must be a Superiour Power: I therefore having been more conversant with my Bible than the numerous Volumes of our Municipal Laws, always thought our Prince was to receive his Punishment from God his only Superiour.

I have often heard it affirmed to be very easie to determine when the Prince (who as Supream has the executive Power of the Law in his Hands) may be Resisted, and of all that I have heard so confidently affirm it, I never yet found any Two agree; one advanced one Notion, the other another: Some maintain, That by one Act of Tyranny (viz. Arbitrary acting against Law) He forfeits all the Allegiance that his Subjects have Sworn to him, and that in such Case they not only may Resist, but even carry it further and say they must, that 'tis an indispensible Duty they owe to their Country; others say, by a continued Male-administration; and some others more modestly agree, That Resistance can never be just fy'd but when the Prince designs to Ruin and Destroy the whole Constitution, and that be made palpably apparent by some Overt act or other. These latter are the most Tender, and (I fear) the smallest Number of the Favourers of this new Doctrine. But all this and the utmost Enquiries I have hitherto made, do but more puzzel than inform me.

Give me Leave, Sir, to put you a Query: Suppose You Gentlemen of the Honourable House of Commons should order a Bill to be brought in to settle the determinate Act or Acts of our Prince that shall justifie the Subjects Resisting Him with Force, do you fore-see it a Point easie to be determined? I dare be bold to say, You'll answer in the Negative: Then presuming it so,

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How can it be ſuppoſed that the Whole Body of the People ſhould agree on one or more determinate Actions, if the Congregate Body in Conſult ſhall find it a Matter of ſuch Difficulty? I am a Zealous and Juſt an Admirer of our Moſt Excellent QUEEN, and the preſent Conſtitution of our Government, that I am moſt abundantly pleaſed with all Meaſures taken for Her and Its Honour, Safety, and Preſervation, and have always ſhewn my Heartineſs by giving my Vote for ſuch Repreſentatives as I thought ſincerely intended the ſame. In the plain Words of a Country-man, I take Advancing Obedience to Her preſent Majeſty and ſuch as ſhall ſucceed Her in the Proteſtant Line as now ſetled by Law, to tend more to the Preſervation of our Happy Monarchy, than the modern Doctrin of Reſiſtance upon Male Adminiſtration, or Something elſe that I ſuppoſe you know though I don't.

To conclude, my mean Opinion is, That our Queen and Government can never be hurt by the Doctrine of Obedience, can never fall without Reſiſtance. 'Tis Amazing to me, That in the Reign of ſo Gracious and Good a QUEEN the Doctrine of Reſiſtance meets with ſo much Encouragement, and even from a Set of Men who in all Ages till this were the great Aſſerters of Obedience: What do they mean. What Intereſt do theſe Men purſue, that while they call themſelves the great Supporters of the Government both in Church and State, are Teaching us that the Supream Power may be Reſiſted? Bitter Pills

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used to be guilt; but this contrary to all Arts appears in its undisguised Nastiness.

Some that have the Honour of a free Conversation with You tell me, that you are not a little dipt into these modern Opinions, that in some Cases Resistance is Lawful: That I may not be any longer groping in the dark, be pleas'd to tell me in what Cases, convince me of the Justness and Convenience of this Modern Principle; for your Prudence and General Knowledge, together with your Personal Favours to me, very much incline my VOTE to your Service, but Honest Men VOTE for such as they think of their own Principles, so if you don't convince me, I don't question but your Candour will excuse my Honest Refusal, who shall in all other Things still Remain,

SIR, Your most

Obliged and Obedient

Country-man, A. B.

FINIS.